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The President's Daily Brief

November 23, 1974

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November 24, 1974*

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UNITED NATIONS

The UN will probably take up the Cambodian and Korean questions simultaneously on Monday.

The Cambodian issue will be debated in the General Assembly and the Korean question in the political committee. This will be the first time two important regional issues are debated at the same time.

Assembly President Bouteflika and Sihanouk's backers have insisted that the Cambodian question be pushed forward to an early debate and vote. The vote will be extremely close on the crucial issue of priority for the counterresolution initiated by Phnom Penh's supporters. Much depends on the vote of still wavering Arab states.

There are rumors that an effort may be made to invite Sihanouk to take part in the debate. His supporters probably recognize, however, that time-consuming deliberations would undercut the drive for an early vote on Cambodia.

Chances are good that the two conflicting resolutions on Korea will be passed by the political committee. North Korea's supporters want the withdrawal of "all foreign troops stationed in South Korea under the flag of the UN." South Korea's friends advocate Security Council review of the entire issue of Korean peacekeeping before any move is made to terminate the UN military role in the peninsula.

If both resolutions pass, the UN will have failed for the first time since 1950 to speak with a clear voice on the Korean issue, and it will be up to the General Assembly to sort out the matter.

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ARAB STATES - EC

The Arabs are attempting to enhance the status of the Palestine Liberation Organization by exploiting the strong desire of the EC for a broad dialogue on economic coopera- They are threatening, in effect, to scuttle the nascent dialogue unless the PLO is permitted to attend the talks.

The Arabs have told the EC that they are "not ready" to hold what was to have been the first meeting of the EC-Arab general committee. The session had been scheduled for next Tuesday in Paris.

The Nine had failed to reach agreement earlier on a common response to an Arab request that the PLO be granted observer status. In addition, on Friday the EC countries abstained during the UN General Assembly vote on Palestinian rights, despite Arab warnings earlier in the week that abstaining would harm the EC-Arab dialogue.

The incipient dialogue developed from a French initiative early this year and was intended to provide a broad framework for relations. Progress in organizing working groups and in completing other administrative preparations was slow even before the Arab attempt to extract political benefit for the Palestinians.

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PORTUGAL

As preparations proceed for the election next March, there are signs that the moderate Social Democratic Center may be frozen out of monitoring voter registration. The Center is the only well organized conservative party left in Portugal.

Voter registration will probably begin early next month. It will be supervised on the precinct level by five-man commissions, and much will depend on the make-up of these groups.

Leftists have recommended that the commissions include one representative each from the Communist, Socialist, and Popular Democratic parties, as well as from the Communist-dominated Portuguese Democratic Movement. The fifth representative would be an "independent." This plan would give the Communists and other leftists control of the commissions; it would also allow them to cite the absence of members of the Social Democratic Center as evidence that the party is not deemed to be "representative."

The recommendation of the leftists is not binding on the presidents of the municipalities, who select the commissions, but in the absence of further guidance it could set a precedent. In any case, the extent to which it is followed will provide a good test of Communist influence in the municipal governments installed after the military takeover. It has been widely rumored that Communist and other left-oriented groups have had considerable success placing their people in these bodies.

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NOTES

USSR-Japan-US: The two-year agreement announced yesterday by El Paso Gas, the USSR, and Japan on exploration for natural gas in eastern Siberia calls for Soviet investment of $400 million. Japan will invest $100 million in the project provided the US does the same. Soviet gas deposits in the area to be explored--near Irkutsk--are believed to be huge. Confirmation of this could lead eventually to contracts for delivery of liquefied natural gas to Japan and the US. The Soviets would not be able to finish building a pipeline to the Pacific and a gas liquefication plant until the early 1980s.

Ethiopia: General Aman, head of the provisional military government, is apparently on his way out. There are reports that he has already been taken into military custody and that he may be put on trial. Aman reportedly lost a crucial vote of confidence on Friday when the ruling military council voted to reaffirm a decision to send reinforcements to fight insurgents in Eritrea Province. Aman has strongly opposed such a move, preferring to pursue a political settlement. Earlier, he had threatened to resign over the issue, and it now appears the military council has decided he must go. There is no clear sign that the members of the council have agreed yet on a replacement for Aman.

Australia: Prime Minister Whitlam has announced that Deputy Prime Minister Cairns will drop his foreign trade responsibilities and become treasurer next month. The shift confirms Cairns' domination of overall economic policy, but it could weaken his political standing with the left by forcing him to make unpopular decisions in coping with Australia's sagging economy. The Labor government is already drawing heavy criticism from the labor unions, its main base of support. No major policy changes are expected.

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